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ABSTRACT

To commemorate 2002 as the centennial year of America's 4-H Movement, the National 4-H Council held a national conversation to identify ways of improving youth development programs. The conversation process included the following activities: 1,577 local conversations that yielded more than 10,000 specific action items; a review of those items at 63 state conversations; and a national conversation at which 1,200 youths and adults representing 600 organizations developed specific national strategies and action steps based on the findings of the local and state conversations. The following youth development strategies were identified: (1) involve youth directly in creating policy and making decisions at all levels of government and society; (2) seek multicultural acceptance and unity for all families, lifestyles, and settings; (3) provide safe, inviting environments for diverse learning strategies; (4) attract exceptional people to the field of youth development and retain them; and (5) build collaboration among youth organizations and across government programs impacting young people. The following were among the specific action steps identified: (1) establish a National Office of Youth, national youth advocate, and other youth advocates within all federal departments and agencies; (2) expand the use of mentoring, work-based and community service learning, and technology; and (3) improve coordination and eliminate duplication among agencies and organizations serving youth. (MN)

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The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century: Final Report

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THE NEW 4-H

The 4-H movement provides opportunities for all youth to participate in innovative, fun programs through which they can develop valuable, lifelong skills. Today, 4-H involves 7 million youth, 50 million alumni, and more than 1,000 programs, ranging from robotics and biotechnology to skateboarding and agriculture.

Its participants reflect the diversity of America, with 30 percent of 4-H youth representing minority populations – the fastest-growing segment of 4-H. Also, 35 percent of youth in 4-H reside in the nation's cities and suburban areas, whereas only one in 10 members live on America's farms.

When 4-H was founded 100 years ago, the U.S. economy was largely agriculture-based and so were many of its programs. As the nation's economy and the interests of America's youth have grown more diverse, 4-H has changed to keep pace with the times. Working in partnership with the Land-Grant Colleges and Universities across the nation, 4-H is able to offer research-based programs in science and technology and many other topics.

By tailoring programs to meet the needs of individual communities, 4-H is able to offer relevant, cutting-edge programs. The diversity of these programs reflects not only the needs of youth and communities, but also 4-H's ongoing commitment to create opportunities for youth to make the most of their individual strengths and reach their full potential through active involvement in their communities.

A SNAPSHOT OF SOME OF TODAY'S 4-H PROGRAMS:

- *4-H After-school Child Care Programs* – Throughout America, 4-H Youth development educators provide staff training, technical assistance, and a wide range of curricula to professionals in school-age care that ensure quality care in local communities. 4-H staff also directly manage many local programs.
- *NASA Program in Conjunction With the Iowa Space Grant Consortium* – An initiative to improve student performance in Earth and Space Sciences by using the Internet to connect students and teachers with NASA's unique resources. This program is also offered in Alabama and Wisconsin.
- *First Skateboard Park in Montana* – A skateboard park was built to provide a safe place for youth. Club meetings include lessons on skateboarding techniques, history, and safety, followed by practice (experiential learning at its best!).
- *Guide Dog Training* – 4-H members across America raise dogs for search and rescue work and guide dog work for hearing-impaired or physically challenged people.
- *Leadership Development Within a Hispanic Community Program* – Provides leadership development opportunities to the Hispanic community.
- *Lego Mindstorms Robotics Camp* – A computer enrichment camp in Pennsylvania for children in grades five and six, providing hands-on experience with Lego motors, sensors, and computer software.

The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century:

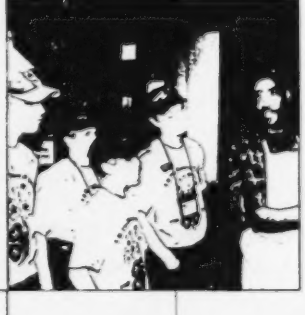
FINAL REPORT

"I THINK THE CONVERSATION IS REALLY GREAT, AND IT'S REALLY PERSONAL. WE ALL GET TO EXCHANGE OUR IDEAS TO COME UP WITH ONE BIG IDEA TO HELP OUT ON POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT."

DANIEL GULLIES 4-H MEMBER IN NEW YORK

"I WAS AWE-STRUCK BY THE PEOPLE I MET. THERE WERE YOUNG WOMEN. THERE WERE YOUNG BLACK WOMEN. THERE WERE WOMEN LIKE ME IN LEADERSHIP ROLES, MAKING THE DIFFERENCE."

NANCY REDD 4-H MEMBER IN VIRGINIA



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4-H Florida & Maryland
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHERS

4-H began a century ago as an educational program for the nation's rural youth. Today, 4-H joins many other youth organizations in meeting the needs of and engaging young people in positive youth development experiences. These experiences are based on the idea that young people should be regarded as resources to be developed and not as problems to be managed. When one emphasizes the potential for positive youth development, one stresses that all youth have strengths and the potential to make healthy and productive contributions to self, family, and community. From this strength-based orientation, we would stop using the language of deficits to label young people as "at risk."

While recognizing the human value of problem prevention and positive youth development, our national economic self-interest also encourages us to make substantial investments in the positive development of youth – especially through group settings. One of the great challenges for today's young people is developing the ability to work together in groups and celebrate the increased diversity of our nation.

If young people are provided with the personal and community assets needed for positive development they can overcome adversity. However, we cannot ignore the fact that youth face challenges on a daily basis that are real and substantial. These include geographic and cultural isolation, economic uncertainty, limited access to technology, and other barriers to full opportunity. The young people who are served by youth development programs are not typically the Americans who drive up negative statistics. But they are Americans who are often impeded from having full access, equity, and opportunity.

When President Bush articulated the goal of "No child left behind," he reaffirmed the mission of youth organizations like today's 4-H.

Simply hearing the term "4-H" conjures images of rural young people. It's an honest image, and has been for a century. However, as the nation has become increasingly urban and diverse, so has 4-H. Today's 4-H participant is nearly as likely to be a city-dweller as a small-town or rural resident. 4-H members reflect the diversity and promise of the nation.

As participation in 4-H has expanded, so has its programs. 4-H prides itself in offering programs that are tailored to the individual needs of communities. Where 4-H once was primarily focused on agriculture, cooking, and sewing, today the programs range from biotechnology to skateboarding. Youth in the Bronx have cleaned up riot-torn communities, while 4-H'ers in Nebraska are teaching migrant workers computer skills and citizenship. By focusing on what a young person needs, 4-H is able to help youth become stronger individuals, creating stronger families and better communities.

2002 marks the centennial of 4-H and its commitment to helping shape youth and communities. In look-

ing to the next century, 4-H wanted to identify what youth and adults need, so it can further develop its programs and continue its motto of "Making the Best Better."

"The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century" was created to answer those questions and create a road map for the next generation of 4-H'ers. In designing "The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century," the processes and goals were shaped in the context of this vision:

> **Youth Development: the natural process of growing up and developing one's capabilities, which is too important to be left to chance. *Positive* youth development occurs from an intentional process that promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing support, relationships, and opportunities. Youth development takes place in families, peer groups, schools, and in neighborhoods and communities, and prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of research-based experiences that help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and intellectually competent.**

Early in 2002, the National Academy of Sciences released a report entitled *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*. The Academy's report recognized the traditional tension between community youth programs focused on prevention and those programs geared towards positive youth development. Prevention programs often concentrate on remediation and preventing specific problem behaviors. By contrast, positive youth development emphasizes strength, capacity building for healthy growth, and the potential for the development of a broad range of personal and social competencies.

A blend of these two approaches is the goal for many youth organizations. We believe positive youth development opportunities take on increased importance in a world where large segments of the youth population may not possess the personal and community assets requisite for achieving their full potential. This is the basis for positive youth development today.

DEAR PARTNERS IN THE YOUTH MOVEMENT:

DONALD FLOYD

America's 4-H youth development movement has always invested in our future by investing in young people. Accordingly, when we considered ways we might commemorate our centennial, we rejected any money-raising or monument-building proposals. We chose instead to dedicate our resources to a massive, nationwide, research and strategic-planning process known as "The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century." It was intended to be 4-H's gift to the nation. In more respects than we could have imagined, it also became the nation's gift to us.

Too often, youth policy has flowed from ivory towers. We know from experience that an effective youth development agenda for the 21st century must begin locally, in the homes and neighborhoods that mold the lives of youth every day. Whether it is young people, their parents, their teachers, their volunteer mentors, or their community officials, the base of our knowledge and expertise for effective and relevant agendas must begin with those who live it everyday.

Valuing of young people as assets and partners is at the core of the 4-H movement. Our National Conversation initiative was structured not only to build from the ground up, but to build by engaging youth and adults as equal partners. This philosophy, combined with 4-H's community partnerships, provided the professional 4-H staff with a foundation and the impetus to convene Conversations in 1,577 counties and parishes.

Furthermore, the success of the National Conversation initiative was critically dependent upon public-private partnerships, a model that has sustained 4-H for a full century. Designated private resources (direct, in-kind, and volunteer) covered well over half the costs of implementing the National Conversation.

We are grateful for the outcomes of the National Conversation initiative, and for the opportunity to report on them. We expect this experience to guide the work of our nation's 4-H movement far into its second century. And we hope that the results will also serve as a guide for positive youth development for the many youth development organizations that partnered with us to produce effective Conversations.

The action agenda contains a few things that already exist, so why did 50,000 people think they are new? As I listened to young people and adults during the Conversations, I was struck by two things: first, the frequent refrain of, "I didn't know you did that," and second, the observation that, "We need to work together on that program." For me, these voices call us to a higher standard of collaboration and communication to ensure the maximum effectiveness of our great programs.

At the conclusion of the National Conversation in Washington, D.C., the facilitators asked participants to suggest possible headlines for a newspaper report on the event. Among the many suggestions, one young person volunteered, "Scattered we came. United we stand!" We started in October 2001 with disparate voices; we adjourned on March 1, 2002, with a collective voice committed to the youth movement.

We hope this report continues the Conversation – and that you, too, become a participant united with us!

Donald T. Floyd, Jr.
President and CEO
National 4-H Council

"THE MISSION OF 4-H, HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE TO BUILD LIFE SKILLS AND TO BECOME PRODUCTIVE CITIZENS, WILL REMAIN AS IMPORTANT AS EVER."

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

2002 is the centennial year of America's 4-H movement. Rather than build a monument to its past, the leadership of this national youth development organization chose to convene "The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century" as its centennial gift to the nation. Never before has our nation created a positive youth development agenda, let alone from the ground up. The Conversations engaged 50,000 people of various ages and backgrounds from all 50 states and Puerto Rico. The Conversations' findings were used to develop an action plan for America's youth.

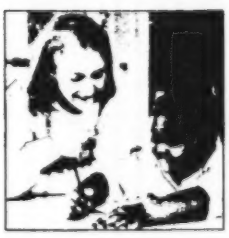
Throughout the Local, State, and National Conversations, participants were asked to focus their discussions on how to develop a positive future for youth in our communities.

The 1,577 Local Conversations began in the autumn of 2001. This first phase produced more than 10,000 specific action items that, in turn, were reviewed by participants at the 63 State Conversations, which took place between the later part of 2001 and early 2002.

On February 28 and March 1, 2002, 1,200 youth and adults, representing 600 organizations, gathered for the National Conversation, the third phase of the Conversation process. Using networked wireless laptop computers and instant polling technology, participants developed specific national strategies and action steps based on the findings of the Local and State Conversations.

The National Conversation experience is a testimony to the diversity of America and the reach and partnerships of 4-H. It involved youth and adults representing every major ethnic, religious, and racial group, and reflected the interests of urban, suburban, and rural communities in all geographic regions of the country.

The results of these Conversations are the most comprehensive and most inclusive ever produced, and they emerged from the most democratic process ever engaged for this purpose.



THE KEY FINDINGS OF "THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY" INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIES:

- Involve youth directly in creating policy and making decisions at all levels of government and society.
- Seek multi-cultural acceptance and unity, for all families, lifestyles, and settings.
- Provide safe and inviting environments for a variety of learning strategies.
- Attract and retain exceptional people to the field of youth development.
- Build collaboration among youth organizations and across government programs impacting young people.

BASED ON THE STRATEGIES ABOVE, THE CONVERSATION'S FINDINGS IDENTIFY SPECIFIC ACTION STEPS THAT INCLUDE:

- Establish a National Office of Youth, a National Youth Advocate, or other youth advocates within each federal department and agency.
- Design programs, educational opportunities, and public relations initiatives to promote knowledge of and celebration for our diversity.
- Expand the use of mentoring, work-based and community-service learning, and technology so that each young person reaches his or her full potential.
- Increase compensation and professional development opportunities to meet the demand for professional youth development staff. Provide training, support, and incentives to expand the quality and number of volunteers needed to fully serve America's young people.
- Maximize the resources invested in youth by creating procedures across youth development organizations and agencies that improve coordination and eliminate duplication.

We see the government as neither the solution nor the problem for youth development, but rather as a key ally and partner, comparable to various business and philanthropic communities. Accordingly, this report will be distributed to President George W. Bush, his Cabinet, youth development and education partners, private and philanthropic communities, and all others who shape and deliver programs affecting America's youth.

"TODAY WE MUST ASK EVERY AMERICAN TO STOP, TO PAUSE, TO ASK THE QUESTION 'WHAT WILL BE MY GREAT SERVICE TO MY NEIGHBOR, MY COMMUNITY, MY COUNTRY AND MY WORLD?'"

JOHN BRIDGELAND DIRECTOR, USA FREEDOM CORPS

A CALL TO OUR NATION'S CITIZENS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

"The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century" recognizes that we are living in a new era. Today's young people are the first generation of Americans to grow up in a nation confronting domestic terrorism. They are a generation facing the limits of government at the local, state, and federal levels. It is a time of new communities, new diversity, and new definitions of citizenship.

This report is built on the premise that no one segment of society can or should carry the responsibility of positive youth development. Indeed, each citizen and each community will determine the success or failure of programs for the youth who live among them.

WE CALL UPON OUR CITIZENS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES TO RECOGNIZE THE POWER AND PARTNERSHIP OF AMERICA'S YOUTH. WE ASK THAT YOU:

- Empower youth as partners in creating policy and making decisions. Young people seek to serve as equal citizens, not to be served as a group in need. They seek to be heard as voices of reason and experience for the challenges facing youth in your community.

- Recognize that many youth are challenged by factors beyond their control. Whether it be geographic, economic, social, cultural, or ethnic barriers, the youth of today reflect the diversity of tomorrow. We ask that, as citizens and communities, you break down the barriers of ignorance, prejudice, and discrimination, and seek ways to provide all young people with access, opportunity, and equity in their pursuit of America's dream.

- Understand that many youth – due to economics, geography, and lack of awareness – want to participate in positive youth development programs, but can't. We encourage you to develop the same level of outreach for youth that your community presently provides senior citizens, especially for transportation and safe, inviting places that offer opportunities to learn, grow, and develop.

- Realize that our schools cannot, nor should they be, expected to carry the entire responsibility of preparing today's child for tomorrow's world. But we encourage our communities' education leaders to broaden the role of local education programs, schools, and community activities to include youth development, service learning, work experience, and other elements of positive youth development.

"HISTORY WILL RECORD HOW WE BUILD A UNITED NATION OF DIVERSE CHILDREN INTO A CIVIL SOCIETY."

LYNN LUCKOW PRESIDENT AND CEO, NORTHERN CALIFORNIA GRANTMAKERS

A CALL TO OUR NATION'S PHILANTHROPIC SECTOR

These are new and different times. No youth agenda today should be premised exclusively on government support. In recent years, America's philanthropic community has made significant investments in our nation's youth. Whether it be in research, direct program support, or evaluation our nation's foundations have become essential partners in positive youth development initiatives. As we move forward, there is much for the philanthropic community to do, including:

- Leading by example. Please consider youth as members of your boards, and the creation of youth advisory committees and review teams.
- Recognizing that the philanthropic sector, in so many ways, has led the nation in understanding and accepting diversity and cultural awareness. We ask that you use the knowledge you have gained from these initiatives to provide similar education programs for all types of families, lifestyles, and places. The philanthropic sector must continue to lead the way in breaking down barriers to access, equity, and opportunity through research, direct leadership, and program support. We encourage philanthropy that invests and partners with youth organizations in these efforts.
- Investing in your home communities. We encourage you to direct part of this investment towards the creation of safe and inviting environments for youth to assemble, learn, and grow.
- Supporting all aspects of youth educational programs. We ask you to recognize the holistic needs of youth development, including academic, non-academic, after-school, and out-of-school initiatives.
- Recognizing that the role of adult volunteers in youth development has changed significantly. Likewise, the need for youth development professionals has increased dramatically. The philanthropic community can play a key role in supporting research and the development of model initiatives for attracting and retaining high-quality youth development professionals.
- Encouraging and supporting collaboration between existing youth development organizations. We believe the philanthropic community is an appropriate source of support for procedures and programs to enhance collaboration and cooperation among our nation's youth development organizations.
- Understanding that many youth – due to economics, geography, and lack of awareness – want to participate in positive youth development programs, but can't. We encourage you to invest in development of model programs that assist communities in overcoming these challenges.

"TAKING AN ENTREPRENEURIAL APPROACH TO FINDING CREATIVE SOLUTIONS EMPOWERS PEOPLE. WE CAN ALL LEARN FROM CHALLENGES AND CHANGE, BUT YOUTH ARE ESPECIALLY WILLING AND ABLE TO EMBRACE BOTH."

JOY PETERSON DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS, BEST BUY CO., INC.

A CALL TO OUR NATION'S CORPORATE COMMUNITY

In an era of limited government resources and increased corporate citizenship, our nation's private sector has become an essential partner in America's youth development movement. The emergence of a high-tech global economy places new opportunities and responsibilities on our corporate sector to engage youth. Public-private partnerships for positive youth development should include:

- Full engagement of youth in the work of your corporation. Companies directly marketing to young people should consider special advisory committees of America's youth in product development, marketing programs, corporate governance, and community affairs.

- A recognition that, in so many ways, the corporate sector leads the nation in providing diversity and cultural awareness training for today's workforce. We ask that you use this knowledge to design and provide similar learning experiences for all types of families, lifestyles, and places in the schools, youth development organizations, and communities where your company is active.

- Leadership for success in the global economy. Our corporate partners can promote awareness and understanding of multi-cultural diversity through business internships, experiences, and public service campaigns that prepare today's youth for full participation in tomorrow's world. For example, our global corporate partners should consider summer internships in their foreign facilities.

- An investment in their home communities. We encourage you to direct part of this investment towards the creation of safe and inviting environments for youth to assemble, learn, and grow, including after-school and out-of-school programs.

- There is a strong need for and desire by youth to learn about the dynamic changes in career opportunities. We strongly encourage our corporate partners and business organizations to invest in job-sharing experiences and career-awareness programs, especially for youth living in the isolated areas of rural and inner-city America.

- Direct partnership with youth development organizations in the design, production, financial support, and distribution of different curricula and programs that address these diverse needs.

"...OUR NATION'S FUTURE LITERALLY IS IN THE HANDS OF 4-H, AND ORGANIZATIONS LIKE IT, THAT WILL MOLD THE NEXT GENERATION OF AMERICANS."

ANN VENEMAN SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

A CALL TO OUR NATION'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

The 4-H movement has built a century of youth development service in its partnership with the Cooperative Extension System, through our nation's Land-Grant Colleges and Universities. Today, the role of education in positive youth development programs is universally recognized as an essential component to growth. "The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century" recognizes this partnership as a key part of our history, but also as an essential component of our future. Accordingly, we ask the nation's education community to:

- Become our partners in the growth and development of our nation's youth by working with us to complement academic curricula with broadly defined positive youth development programs. We ask that you open your schools to youth development programs and activities, and cooperate with youth development professionals in designing and implementing these programs.

- Recognize that today's youth seek experiential learning opportunities at early ages. Whether it be work-based experiences or service-learning opportunities, we ask America's educators to consider integrated curricula that respond to the different needs of student's while building the values for tomorrow's citizens.

- Recognize that today's youth seek specific curricula and materials in both civic leadership and character education. Every community, no matter how large or small, needs a new generation of citizen leaders. We seek the partnership of our education community in meeting this need.

- Understand that the youth of today recognize the increasing diversity of our nation. They seek multicultural programs to enhance the knowledge of and celebration for this diversity in ways that break down prejudice and discrimination while encouraging full access, equity, and opportunity for all.

- Respond to the many young people who feel isolated. Whether it be our inner cities or rural areas, youth don't want to miss out on new and creative educational opportunities. Accordingly, they seek mobile education labs and expanded technological opportunities that provide equal access to the excitement of today's new world.

- Offer youth safe and inviting places to grow and learn. Our schools seek to offer this security during the academic day. We encourage you to consider ways to support such needs beyond the traditional school day and year, especially when your community has few other options for children to assemble, learn, and grow safely.

"TO MEET THE NEEDS OF STRONG FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES WILL REQUIRE A NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS WHO ARE COMMITTED TO RUNNING FOR OFFICE, BECOMING GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AND PUBLIC SERVANTS, AND LEADING IN THEIR COMMUNITY, CHURCH, AND SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS."

SENATOR PAT ROBERTS OF KANSAS

A CALL TO OUR NATION'S FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

"The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century" recognizes our federal government's limits of resources and responsibilities. Yet, it also recognizes the important and essential leadership role the government must provide on behalf of positive youth development. Accordingly, participants call upon the President, his Cabinet, and the Congress to carefully consider ways they can encourage and support positive youth development. For in the end, there is no greater domestic security than the education of tomorrow's citizens. Thus, we call upon the government to:

- Assure that the voices and needs of our nation's youth are considered in today's government. We encourage you to examine various options to achieve this goal, including a National Office of Youth, a Youth Advocate, or a voice within each department and agency on behalf of youth.
- Create a National Youth Advisory Board and to consider appointing youth representatives to existing and future advisory boards, particularly those that impact directly on youth programs (especially important for the President and Congress).
- Establish a national award for excellence in youth leadership and service.
- Provide model programs, technical assistance, start-up grants, and other initiatives to support diversity and cultural awareness training for youth and adults.
- Provide national and international learning experiences that promote multi-cultural awareness, unity, and understanding.
- Support incentives and research initiatives that strengthen the field and profession of youth development.
- Expand our community service programs in the field of youth development, and encourage community service initiatives by younger citizens.
- Promote and support mentoring and tutoring programs, especially in our rural and inner-city areas.
- Provide support for career awareness programs that give today's youth a better knowledge of potential career fields, recognizing the dramatic changes in professional choices in our global hi-tech economy.
- Partner with today's youth development organizations to create an agenda that assures no child is left behind – in their schools, their communities, or their future.

"OUR NATION, IN CONTRAST TO SOME COUNTRIES, WAS FORMED AROUND AN IDEA OF DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AND INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES, AND NOT AROUND TRIBE, RACE, OR ETHNIC GROUPS. IT HAS GROWN TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE, RESPECTING INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM AND POTENTIAL. BUT, OUR NATION NEEDS PEOPLE LIKE YOU WHO HAVE THE VISION TO SEE THAT POTENTIAL."

CONGRESSWOMAN EVA CLAYTON OF NORTH CAROLINA

THE STEPS WE MUST TAKE FOR ACTION

Throughout the process of the Local, State, and National Conversations, thousands of ideas for action were suggested – 10,000 at the local level alone! This report summarizes 21 priority strategies, identified during "The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century," for enhancing a more positive youth development agenda in America. While the government can and should be a key partner in this process, the National Conversation has been careful to articulate strategies for both public and private engagement. On the second day of the National Conversation, the delegates focused on explaining the specific ways in which these strategies could be implemented. The specific action steps, like the strategies they seek to implement, are a combination of public- and private-sector initiatives.

This section of the report seeks to accomplish two things. First, it will carefully and accurately convey the results of the National Conversation. Second, it will overlay these recommendations with examples for federal responses, and other public-private responses, offering insight into the multiple ways citizens can become advocates for a positive youth development agenda. Delegates at the National Conversation have already begun to translate the recommendations of this report into similar activities at their state and local levels.

Political movements are sustained by the common ideology of their goals. The youth development movement in America is sustained by its common mission, but also recognizes that diverse ideologies can offer different ways to implement these goals. As we celebrate the diversity of today's youth, we must likewise reflect this diversity in our strategies for progress, knowing that different regions, different cultures, different ages, and different communities – urban, suburban, and rural – will find alternative ways to respond. We believe that our celebration of this diversity is our strength. We offer these recommendations in this spirit.

"TODAY WE TALK ABOUT THE POWER OF YOU. TODAY WE TALK ABOUT THE POWER OF YOUTH. TODAY WE TALK ABOUT THE POWER OF COMMITMENT. TODAY WE TALK ABOUT THE POWER OF SERVICE."

ERIC WOLFE COORDINATOR, NATIONAL 4-H YOUTH DIRECTIONS COUNCIL

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE THE POWER OF YOUTH

The National Conversation delegation made a number of recommendations for enhancing the power of youth as full partners in American society, based upon the four major strategies that were identified. Below is the recap of the strategies, followed by the recommended action steps:

- Create a National Office of Youth or employ other means to assure the full consideration of the needs, interests, and participation of youth in public policy formulation.
- Empower youth directly in creating policy and making decisions at all levels of government and society.
- Provide full youth representation on boards and committees that affect their communities and their lives.
- Establish a National Youth Advisory Board.

- Define the specific role and mission for an Office of Youth, a Youth National Advocate, or youth advocates within each department. The President could direct each agency to report to him on ways to enhance the voices of youth and youth programs within their agencies. Upon review of these reports, the White House could determine the most appropriate way to promote positive youth development across the federal government and in partnership with the private sector.

- Direct the Departments of Education, Agriculture, Labor, Health and Human Services, Justice, and Housing and Urban Development to assign specific individuals to collaborate on the creation of a coordinated strategy to empower and support the interests of America's young people. Such departments could report to the President and the Congress on an annual basis regarding their recommendations and priorities for the upcoming year. Such reports could be developed in consultation with adult and youth representatives of the nation's leading youth development organizations.

- Design and implement a comprehensive civic education program through our schools, community organizations, and private-sector initiatives. Specifically, the government could seek ways to enhance youth experience in government at all levels through internships and other programs to promote public service and better understand the nation's democratic process.

- Seek ways – both legislatively and administratively – to include the voice and participation of youth on federal panels and boards, particularly those that relate to the interests of America's young people (which can actually be argued are all of them). We especially encourage the President to create a National Youth Advisory Board, similar in mission and responsibility to other national advisory boards.

"I THINK IT'S GREAT TO HAVE EVERYBODY COME TOGETHER FOCUSING ON ONE THING BECAUSE THE UNITY IS REAL IMPORTANT. BECAUSE WHEREVER UNITY IS, THERE'S STRENGTH."

CHRISTINE THOMAS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT, NORTH CAROLINA

TO ENHANCE ACCESS, EQUITY, AND OPPORTUNITY

The National Conversation delegation offered recommendations for implementing its goal to enhance access, equity, and opportunity for all young Americans, based upon the four major strategies that were identified. Below is the recap of the strategies, followed by the recommended action steps:

- Increase coordination and cooperation between public schools and youth organizations.
- Provide a national media campaign to create awareness of the importance of youth development activities, and promote the availability of such opportunities for all youth.
- Provide each young person with experiences that promote multi-cultural acceptance and unity, and provide diversity and cultural awareness training and learning for all types of families, lifestyles, and settings.
- Recognize the transportation challenges that prevent so many youth and adults from participating in community and youth development activities.

- While the National Conversation recognized the important state and local roles in education, we encourage governments at all levels to help strengthen the impact of positive youth development by connecting the learning between in-school and out-of-school experiences. We encourage governments at all levels to enhance existing initiatives that provide full access for youth development programs and opportunities. These may include: student participation in school boards and committees, schools serving as full resources to the entire community, and the Department of Education providing technical assistance and models of creative youth engagement in the delivery of education programs.

- Effective youth development programs – promoting positive growth in America's young people – are the nation's best kept secret. We encourage our nation's philanthropic community and our private-sector partners to design advertising and promotion campaigns that reach all youth and their families, showing the importance and possibilities of positive youth development. As part of this initiative, we encourage the promotion of model programs that effectively reach and serve the broadest population of young people.

- We strongly encourage the public and private sectors to recognize the importance of multi-cultural diversity in America today. Our nation's increased diversity places us in an important time in history. We ask the President, the Congress, and our philanthropic- and our private sector partners to join America's youth in designing educational opportunities and public relations efforts that promote experience with and celebration of our increased cultural diversity.

- We call upon the Administration and the Congress to review our existing transportation systems to seek innovative ways to use both urban and rural transportation funding programs to encourage and assist participation in community service and youth development programs.

"In a democracy, the wisdom of a nation depends upon the wisdom of its citizens. We literally cannot afford to leave anyone behind."

BILL HANSEN DEPUTY SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

TO CREATE EXTRAORDINARY PLACES TO LIVE AND LEARN

The National Conversation delegation made a number of recommendations for implementing its goal to create extraordinary places to live and learn, based upon the four major strategies that were identified. Below is the recap of the strategies, followed by the recommended action steps:

- Consider investing 20% of the academic year in experiential learning through work-based learning, community-service learning, and other hands-on youth development activities.
- Establish safe and inviting environments for youth development opportunities.
- Foster and promote intergenerational mentoring and sharing of experiences.
- Use the latest technology to attract and teach youth to more fully participate in significant learning experiences.

- Consistent with the President's call for Americans to commit two years to community service and recent studies proving the value of community-based learning, we encourage our nation's government and education systems to review our curricula for ways that integrate service and work-based learning experiences for our nation's youth. Such programs will assist many students who find traditional academic teaching difficult, while instilling in most youth an appreciation of the value of applying one's head, heart, and hands to community service. We ask the President, through the USA Freedom Corps and the Department of Education, to provide program leadership.

- We recognize that today's youth face new and different professional choices. Accordingly, we encourage the public and private sectors to design programs that expand 21st century career opportunities for today's youth – especially those in rural and inner-city America. We stand ready to work with the federal government, the business community, and others to design and promote career awareness and workforce preparation programs that empower youth to reach beyond their present horizons.

- Our nation's youth seek safe and inviting places to live and learn. Today's young people are challenged by out-of-school and after-school environments that put at risk their safety and ability to develop healthy social habits. The government, at all levels, is responsible for public safety. We encourage initiatives at the federal, state, and local levels to consider the needs of youth in their public safety programs. The private sector carries a responsibility and an opportunity to support the creation of places and programs for youth during their social time. We especially encourage the creation of such places in rural and inner-city areas, where few places exist today for youth and youth development outside of the school setting.

- All youth seek role models. Accordingly, we encourage the public and private sectors to grow intergenerational mentoring opportunities to a scale and scope that makes them an everyday part of young people's lives. While these can be supported through public initiatives, we also encourage private and faith-based opportunities.

"THROUGH THE PROCESS OF REACHING OUT TO OTHERS, WE LEARN VOLUMES ABOUT OURSELVES. SERVING OUR COMMUNITIES BUILDS STRENGTH OF MIND, STRENGTH OF CHARACTER, AND STRENGTH OF HEART."

HON. JEFF TRANDAHL CLERK OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TO BRING EXCEPTIONAL PEOPLE AND INNOVATIVE PRACTICES TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The National Conversation delegation offered recommendations for implementing its goal of bringing exceptional people and innovative practices to youth development, based upon the four major strategies that were identified. Below is the recap of the strategies, followed by the recommended action steps:

- Strengthen the profession of youth development.
- Develop year-long community service programs with education scholarship incentives.
- Provide mentoring and tutoring services between older and younger youth.
- Support innovative ways to expose young people to new careers, including job shadowing, internships, etc.

- Today's youth development profession is not an accidental occupation; it is a key element of the successful development of our nation's future. The federal government can assist this professional calling by providing enhanced incentives to youth development workers, piloting and modeling programs to attract our country's most talented individuals to the profession, and provide loan forgiveness similar to some medical and teaching incentives. The philanthropic community must engage in a major national effort to establish a recognized and valued profession of youth work that has standards, a research base, and a professional association. The private sector should consider supporting these individuals through grants and incentives.

- We encourage the federal government (through one of its many departments) and the philanthropic community, together with state governments and universities, to conduct and translate comprehensive research that will make a difference in the lives of youth. This includes applied research that helps: 1) communities understand what influences families and young people to choose positive uses for out-of-school time, 2) youth development organizations shape programs that have greater impact on young people, 3) adults understand the power of youth in transforming the way communities and organizations work, 4) professionals and volunteers better understand how they can make a difference in the lives of youth, 5) individuals and communities understand cultural differences and value cultural competency, and 6) educators and youth workers understand the value and importance of connecting in-school and out-of-school learning and creating positive developmental opportunities in all settings.

- We encourage the federal government to expand the work of AmeriCorps to support the positive youth development needs across the nation. We encourage special initiatives to partner with the various youth development organizations in staffing their programs. And we encourage the federal and state governments to consider education and monetary incentives that promote mentoring programs between older and younger youth.

- We encourage the Department of Labor and the private sector to support innovative ways to expose our nation's youth to new careers. We call upon the private sector to create and support initiatives that provide more youth, especially those from our inner cities and rural areas, opportunities to learn about and experience new professional opportunities. 4-H and other youth development organizations stand ready to lead these efforts through the design and delivery of career awareness programs.

"As terrific as America's first-place finishes and medals are, the messages of Salt Lake are about more than victory. They're about the path to victory. They're about teamwork, investment, and values... ."

James Moseley Deputy Secretary, Department of Agriculture

TO CREATE EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONS FOR POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The National Conversation delegation made a number of recommendations for implementing its goal of creating more effective organizations for positive youth development, based upon the five major strategies that were identified. Below is the recap of the strategies, followed by the recommended action steps:

- Create procedures to facilitate collaboration between existing youth organizations.
- Establish a Cabinet-level Youth Advocate and/or departmental youth advocates to promote collaboration across government agencies and programs.
- Develop a comprehensive youth budget across agencies to promote efficiency and coordination in government programs.
- Create special incentives for the private sector to support youth development.
- Recognize that youth development is an essential part of our nation's total education delivery system and needs to be part of the education agenda.

- First, we call upon the philanthropic community and the government to fund, organize, and support procedures to improve the programming, coordination, and leadership across our major national youth organizations. We are not competitors. We are partners investing in America's future.
- Consistent with earlier recommendations, we call upon the President to create a national voice on behalf of youth in the nation's government. While we prefer a National Office of Youth or Youth Advocate, we encourage nothing less than a voice for youth in all agencies with youth development programs. Similar to the Office of Civil Rights that exists within various departments, we believe a youth office could provide equally vital service to our nation's youngest citizens.
- We also ask the Administration and the Congress to develop a coordinated youth budget across agencies. Our goal is to maximize service by minimizing duplication of services and bureaucracy in the government's service to our young. We don't want to waste any money targeted for investment in our nation's future.
- We believe the private sector – with government's encouragement – will play an increasingly important role in youth development program leadership and delivery. Their participation should be encouraged and rewarded through tax credits, set-asides, preferences, model programs, and other incentives.
- We believe positive youth development is part of the total education of our nation's youth. We encourage the President and the Congress, possibly through the Department of Education, to provide leadership in making youth development and civic education key components of a comprehensive education agenda, both in and out of school.

"THIS IS AMERICA'S DAY IN THE SUN. AND AS YOUNG PEOPLE, IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE THE DEFINITION OF LIBERTY TO ITS NEXT STEP."

CONGRESSMAN ADAM PUTNAM OF FLORIDA

A NATION WHERE EVERY YOUNG PERSON MUST MATTER

These ideals guide many private-sector investments in youth development and other public projects. It is our hope they also guide our nation's investment in youth.

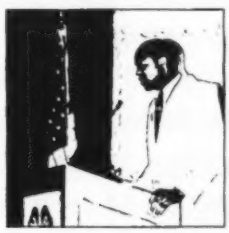
For decades, Americans have proudly suggested that our greatest natural resource is our human capital. If this were true before, it is even more so in today's information age. Therefore, an investment in our nation's future must begin with a commitment to young people. They are, quite literally, the future of America.

We live in a special moment in history. No nation represents the diversity, the freedom, and the potential of America. The tragedy of September 11th has caused us to re-evaluate our priorities. And in this process, our communities, our families, and our children became more important.

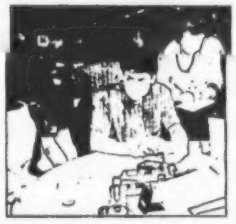
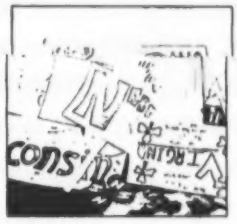
Today's youth must become our investment of choice. For no economic recovery plan, no domestic security program, and no social investment will matter unless youth are fully prepared to serve as tomorrow's leaders.

But the difference between the National Conversation and every other initiative of its kind through American history is that adults don't see youth only as children preparing for their future. Rather, we see young people as assets and partners, colleagues working together to improve the quality of life for today and tomorrow. No similar initiative has ever engaged an equal number of youth and adults in deliberations. It started with 1,577 Local Conversations, continued with 63 State Conversations, and concluded with 1,200 delegates assembling for a national event. This report is the product of no less than 50,000 participants across America – half adults and half youth.

The National Conversation began with over 10,000 local suggestions for action. You hold one national report to the President, his Cabinet, the Congress, and the nation. It is the result of one common goal from every participant: "A nation where every young person must matter."



APPENDIX

THE STRATEGIES FOR A YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

When the planning process for "The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century" began, a 4-H county educator from Illinois (also a member of the planning committee) pleaded "not to build another report that emphasizes all our problems without any plans for action." Instead, he suggested that "We must create an action agenda of specific steps to be taken at the local, the state, and the national levels to enhance the future of our nation's young people." Anything else, he argued, would fail.

As a result, the process has focused squarely on strategies for action. Over 40,000 individuals produced more than 10,000 different recommendations for action at the local level. Plus, more than 8,000 people participated in State Conversations, refining these recommendations to include state needs, while bridging the roles of both the local and national efforts. A full 94% of participants in the National Conversation in Washington, D.C. had earlier participated in their State and/or Local Conversations, providing a very high level of continuity.

THE NATIONAL PROCESS WAS INTENDED TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING CHALLENGING QUESTIONS:

- What common themes do you bring from your state to a national perspective?
- What strategies do you believe are most important for a national (as opposed to just the federal government) response?
- What specific implementation steps do you suggest for advancing these recommendations?

The goal was action, not rhetoric; results, not excuses.

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE THE POWER OF YOUTH

"The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century" was conceived with the premise that our nation's youth must become a part of the national agenda. They want to contribute to America's dream; they want to join with adults as equal citizens in the act of governing.

If we really care about and want young people to succeed, all of us must reorganize to work with them, not for them. Our strategies must consider what it will take for youth to become engaged and empowered as full and valued partners in society. Those in attendance at the National Conversation rejected both tokenism and bureaucracy as mere symbols. Rather, they desired valuing youth as full partners in decision making and governance.

The National Conversation brought forth nine different options from the Local and State Conversations, suggesting ways to enhance the power and voices of our nation's youth. Four suggestions were combined to best define the general theme and goal of empowering youth as full citizens and members of society. Each participant was asked to identify the specific strategy he or she most supported to "enhance the power of youth." The following four strategies were ranked as most important:

Create a National Office of Youth	31%
Empower youth directly in creating policy and making decisions at all levels	15%
Provide full youth representation on boards and committees that affect their communities and their lives	15%
Establish a National Youth Advisory Board	[illegible]

(THE REMAINING 25% WAS DIVIDED BETWEEN FIVE ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES THAT WERE OFFERED FOR CONSIDERATION. PERCENTAGES RANGED BETWEEN 3% AND 8%.)

The federal government, along with most private and philanthropic entities, view today's youth as a constituency to serve. This is only part of the story, and perhaps the least important part. Young people seek to work alongside adults – to offer their insight and ideas, their suggestions and advice, and their talents and hard work. For America's youth, the future is now. All they ask is the chance to join with adults in the struggle for progress and democracy.

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE ACCESS, EQUITY, AND OPPORTUNITY

There is school. And then there are out-of-school activities and opportunities defined as positive youth development. It seems that we have unnecessarily created a schism and tension between the two. Youth and adults who gathered at the National Conversation understand the value of experiential learning and seek ways to connect our academic and youth development activities, and strengthen both in the process. They seek ways to pursue a holistic approach to youth development that resists the artificial barriers of diversity, race, cultural differences, transportation, academic schedules, income, geography, IQ, and other factors that limit full participation by all youth. Each participant was asked to identify the best strategies for achieving full access, equity, and opportunity for all our nation's youth in the full development of their potential. They recommended the following strategies most frequently:

Increase coordination and cooperation between public schools and youth organizations. — **29%**

Provide a national media campaign to create awareness of the importance of youth development activities, and promote the availability of such opportunities for all youth. — 28%

Provide each young person with experiences to promote multi-cultural acceptance and unity, and provide diversity and cultural awareness training and learning for all types of families, lifestyles, and settings. — 27%

Recognize the transportation challenges which prevent so many youth and adults from participating in community and youth development activities. — 12%

(THE REMAINING 4% WAS DIVIDED BETWEEN TWO ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES THAT WERE OFFERED FOR CONSIDERATION. ONE ATTRACTED 3%, THE OTHER 1%.)

Now, more than ever, we must ensure that all youth development programs serve all citizens of the community by providing equitable access and opportunity for not only young people, but volunteers, and youth development professionals as well, regardless of location, heritage, gender, sexual orientation, financial status, or need for personal support. We must be aggressive in reaching under-served and under-represented youth and their families. We must leverage our networks, and along with our public- and private-sector partners, give particular attention to the disparities that exist in access to information and technology.

The National Conversation delegation is calling for ways to better connect young people and communities, to learning opportunities and to maximize the developmental benefits of both in-school and out-of-school time. While we know it does not yet exist for many of our nation's young people, we seek equal opportunity for all.

STRATEGIES TO CREATE EXTRAORDINARY PLACES TO LIVE AND LEARN

It is the quality of programs and experiences that guide our learning. Impacted by their diverse roots in rural America and inner cities, the National Conversation delegation believes that extraordinary places to live and learn are determined by the quality and safety of the total learning environment. Each participant was asked to rank the most important strategies for achieving an extraordinary place to live and learn. The National Conversation delegation placed particular emphasis on experiential learning through work-based learning and community service:

Consider investing 20% of the academic year in experiential learning through work-based learning, community-service learning, and other hands-on youth development activities. — 25%

Establish safe and inviting environments for youth development learning experiences. — 21%

Foster and promote intergenerational mentoring and sharing of experiences. —

Use the latest technology to attract and teach youth to more fully participate in significant learning experiences. — 14%

(THE REMAINING 26% WAS DIVIDED BETWEEN THREE ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES THAT WERE OFFERED FOR CONSIDERATION. THEY RANGED BETWEEN 5% AND 11%.)

Quality educational experiences and strong communities can change a young person's life. Today's youth want more than the traditional academic classroom. They understand that life-long learning begins with those experiences that relate academics to real life situations.

The National Conversation delegation does not seek an abbreviated school week. Rather delegates seek to enhance the current week with the experiential learning of applied academics in ways that empower all youth to achieve both their learning potential and their development as full partners in the community of citizens. The delegates are calling for opportunities for learning through deeds as well as learning to read.

Today's youth seek safe, innovative, and positive places to learn. They see life as a laboratory for learning that reaches far beyond the traditional classroom walls. It is now our challenge to revolutionize the ways adults help youth build confidence and master critical life skills for the betterment of themselves, our communities, and our country.

STRATEGIES TO BRING EXCEPTIONAL PEOPLE AND INNOVATIVE PRACTICES TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The youth development movement hinges on attracting and retaining quality, passionate people with a heart for working with youth and a head for employing innovative strategies that will keep them interested and engaged. Volunteers are responsible for many of the achievements of youth development, and experience demonstrates that high-quality, successful efforts also often incorporate professionals who are singularly dedicated to youth work.

The people – professionals and volunteers – who staff programs are an essential element in positive youth development, yet we, as a nation, have done little to support or nurture them. Working with youth seems often more an art than a science. The youth development field is characterized by low pay, high turnover, a lack of access to training, and inadequate or dangerous facilities.

Nevertheless, youth development programs in today's world rely increasingly upon youth development professionals. Furthermore, traditional youth development programs and activities began in an era when kids simply looked for ways to fill their time. It is essential for the positive development of today's youth that we identify national strategies for recruiting and retaining passionate, committed people who employ creative, modern techniques for working with youth. We must devise ways of developing professionals who can leverage and enlist the support of new types of volunteers, including youth themselves.

Today, while there are countless variations, two major sets of young people exist, located at opposite ends of the spectrum: those who are over-scheduled, over-committed, and over-extended, and those who suffer from having little or no opportunity for positive youth development. Research indicates that as many as 11 million youth are left without access to some kind of after-school programming. Youth development programs must recognize these broad and varied challenges for its participants and its leadership. When the National Conversation delegation considered strategies to enhance the people and

practices in positive youth development today, each participant identified the strategy that he or she considered most important:

Strengthen the profession of youth development, attracting talented and energetic people through better pay, better standards, and better recognition. — 38%

Expand year-long community service programs with incentives such as scholarships for education. — 20%

Provide mentoring and tutoring services between older and younger youth. — 11%

Support innovative ways to expose young people to careers in youth development, including job shadowing, internships, etc. — 17%

(THE REMAINING 20% WAS DIVIDED BETWEEN THREE ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES THAT WERE OFFERED FOR CONSIDERATION. PERCENTAGES RANGED BETWEEN 4% AND 8%.)

The strength of the youth development movement lies in the people who are committed to it. Attracting, training, supporting, recognizing, and rewarding dedicated youth volunteers and staff is an important investment in the future of our nation's young people. We must recognize and address the need for more youth development professionals. We must also recognize and address the need for capacity-building in our volunteer leaders. Additionally, giving proper focus and attention to the innovative practices that youth programs offer goes hand-in-hand with recruiting youth professionals and volunteers. Today's youth programs require innovation in order to compete successfully with other activities vying for youth's time and attention.

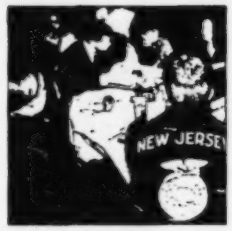
STRATEGIES TO CREATE EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONS

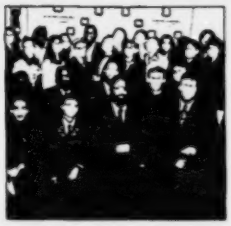
Positive youth development requires vibrant, innovative organizations with substantial resources so that they can transform and extend the available opportunities and supports to all young people. Consider how we can support youth organizations to be more effective in addressing critical youth needs through collaboration, marketing, and innovative public/private funding arrangements.

There is no dedicated funding stream for community programs that support youth. Youth development organizations could be more effective by working together rather than treating each other as "the competition." And we need to do a better job of marketing and publicizing how we make a positive difference in the lives of young people, not assuming that "by our good works we shall be known."

The future success of community programs for youth, in promoting adolescent development and well-being, as well as the successful transition to adulthood, is dependent on consistent, reliable, and broad-based public and private investments at the federal, state, and community levels. In addition, there needs to be a more coordinated, collective voice for youth development at all levels.

An effective youth development organization will recognize youth as full partners in the process of promoting positive youth development. It will not treat them as a special constituency.





Each participant was asked to define the strategy that would promote and develop the most effective youth organizations. The National Conversation delegation identified five strategies which assure that the needs of youth are appropriately and efficiently considered as part of the national agenda:

Create procedures to facilitate collaboration of existing youth organizations. — [redacted]

Establish a Cabinet-level Youth Advocate and/or create youth advocates in every Cabinet agency similar to existing programs for civil rights. — 20%

Develop a national youth budget across government programs so that funds are efficiently coordinated and properly directed. — 17%

Create special incentives for the private sector, especially business, to support youth development. — 16%

Recognize that youth development is an essential part of our nation's education system and include youth development organizations and programs within the nation's education agenda. — 12%

(ONE ADDITIONAL STRATEGY ATTRACTED THE REMAINING 3%.)

Great institutions, efforts, and movements survive because their missions are timeless, ethical, and essential. While the mission of youth development endures, new approaches to achieve the mission will require new ways of thinking and doing. The National Conversation calls for an elevation of the role youth and youth development play in American society. But they do so with great sensitivity to government efficiency, private-sector partnerships, and the absence of duplication among youth development organizations and their programs.

WHY A NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY?

It seems like a simple gift to the nation, commemorating the 4-H movement's centennial year. But the National Conversation was meant to achieve so much more.

The United States of America is the only modern, western country without a national youth agenda. This peculiar omission is undoubtedly a reflection of the political diversity of our people and of our leadership, not a generalized lack of concern for youth. We have been unable, until now, to meld the sincere but different philosophies defining the public-sector and private-sector roles in positive youth development into a broad national agenda. Three factors guided the design and implementation of the National Conversation.

1) FOCUS ON POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Positive youth development looks toward creating supportive communities for all young people and empowering youth to actively engage in their own development while contributing to the well-being of the larger community. The positive youth development perspective asks how communities can help youth develop the confidence, competence, connections, caring, and character to contribute in meaningful ways so that they become healthy adults. Each of the 1,640 Local and State Conversations began with one basic question: "In the next three to five years, what are the most important actions we can take to create the future we want for youth in our community?" Our focus has consistently and purposely been on action, not ideology.

2) CREATE A NATIONAL CONVERSATION STARTING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Never before in our nation's history has a conversation process on youth development been facilitated from the grassroots to the national level. We were convinced this was the right time, that 4-H could be the convenor, and that a conversation was the appropriate process for building national consensus. The 1,573 reported Local Conversations engaging over 40,000 participants led to 63 State Conversations (some states held multiple events) engaging over 8,000 participants. Through this process we were able to create local action agendas at the community level, state action agendas for each of the states and territories, and a foundation for our National Conversation.

3) RECOGNIZE THE NEED FOR A NEW AGENDA IN A NEW ERA

We began planning this process early in 2001, long before September 11th. But we soon recognized that no youth development agenda created before that tragic day was relevant in an era of children growing up amidst the threat of domestic terrorism. Our Local Conversations began in late September and October 2001. They served as a time for healing and reflection. And they helped chart community agendas for the future.

THE LOCAL CONVERSATIONS

When the leadership of 4-H designed the National Conversation initiative, they created a public-private partnership to guide the process. On March 29, 2001, Senators Richard Lugar (R-Indiana) and Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) introduced Senate Bill 657 authorizing federal support for the initiative. Similar legislation (HR 1388) was introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressmen Greg Ganske (R-Iowa) and Frank Lucas (R-Oklahoma), and Congresswoman Eva Clayton (D-North Carolina). With no less than 34 Senators and 57 Representatives as co-sponsors, legislation was passed by the end of June. President Bush signed the legislation into law on July 10, 2001, as **Public Law 107-19.**

Local and County Conversations laid the groundwork for the National Conversation held in February 2002. Beginning during National 4-H Week in October 2001, and continuing through the following fall and winter, the Conversations identified specific public and private action steps needed to improve youth development in communities across America. Over 67,000 hours of volunteer and staff time were devoted to the Conversations as over 40,000 individuals of all ages gathered to articulate their local agendas while feeding these concerns and suggestions to their State Conversation.

RESULTS OF THE MANY CONVERSATIONS WERE ABUNDANT AND VARIED. THE MOST COMMON RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY ACTION INCLUDED:

- Establish safe places and environments for youth to convene and have positive learning and socializing experiences.
- Ensure access to youth programs and educational opportunities for all youth, building respect and tolerance for others.
- Enhance the role and image of adult mentors while building more youth/adult partnerships.
- Involve youth in meaningful leadership and governance roles within the community, treating them as full partners while teaching them civic responsibility.
- Promote youth involvement in community service, service learning, and volunteerism.
- Enhance the coordination, collaboration, and partnership between youth and community organizations to maximize opportunities and resources.
- Emphasize for young people the importance of life skills education.
- Increase the visibility of positive youth development experiences so that such opportunities continue to grow.
- Promote positive youth activities and learning experiences.
- Encourage parents to increase their involvement with their children.

Interestingly, most of these common themes were not exclusive to the Local Conversation, but were threaded throughout the State and National Conversations as well.

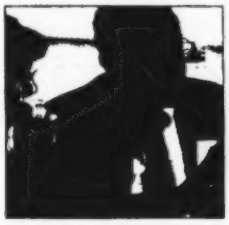
THE STATE CONVERSATIONS

More than five dozen State Conversations served as a bridge between local efforts and the National Conversation event. Beginning with the Kansas State Conversation on September 30, 2001, and concluding with the Mississippi Conversation on February 12, 2002, over 8,000 individuals participated in statewide events. Some states, like South Dakota, conducted their Conversation at two locations simultaneously, using an electronic conferencing system. Kentucky held State Conversations at eight different locations at the same time, following a single agenda. The sites were later linked via satellite for a panel discussion about their collective results.

For the first time, participants were challenged to think beyond their local communities to focus on statewide and even regional needs and action agendas. With many state budgets facing deficits today, a consistent theme that emerged from the Conversations was the need for more resources to meet the state-level challenges of youth development. Whether built on the expectation of public resources, philanthropic partnerships, or private-sector commitments, State Conversations led to recommendations of priority initiatives. Some of the areas meriting the most support for new resources included:

- Specific programs such as mentoring, youth healthcare education, training on parenting, diversity training, fine arts and the humanities.
- Funding and resources for out-of-school and after-school youth development, including safe environments for youth to gather for these programs.
- Transportation for out-of-school youth development experiences.
- Incentives and partnerships for businesses and individuals who encourage mentoring programs, volunteering, and support for youth development efforts.
- The creation of new and innovative youth development programs.
- Positive prevention programs, which reduce the need for successful intervention programs.

Most State Conversations recognized that these new or additional resources would not just happen. They knew such resources would only become available if a new generation of youth advocates could be found or placed within the public, philanthropic, and corporate arenas.



THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME OF THE MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS THAT CAME ABOUT FROM THE STATE CONVERSATIONS:

POWER OF YOUTH:

- Empower youth voices and action directly in decision-making, governance, and leadership roles at all levels, especially where the interests of youth are involved.
- Consider the development of national guidelines and standards to guide states in the creation of youth leadership and development programs, mentoring, and tutoring initiatives.
- Design protocols for youth and adults to partner as mentors and teachers.
- Look for ways to create national youth representative bodies as a way to hear and encourage the voices of our nation's young citizens.

ACCESS, EQUITY, AND OPPORTUNITY:

- Promote diversity and tolerance training/learning.
- Expand global learning opportunities for youth.
- Produce more high-quality programs and materials that serve cross-cultural, multi-ethnic audiences.
- Recognize the need for transportation resources to facilitate real access and opportunity in youth development programs.
- Develop more youth employment opportunities and workforce development programs.

AN EXTRAORDINARY PLACE TO LIVE AND LEARN:

- Expand the availability and quality of after-school and out-of-school programs.
- Create multiple, Internet-based, youth development resource clearinghouses.
- Create high-quality curricula and programming on leadership, service, mentoring, life skills, youth healthcare, character education, and the environment.
- Establish safe environments for youth to convene and have positive youth development experiences.

EXCEPTIONAL PEOPLE, INNOVATIVE PRACTICES:

- Enhance the interest in, support for, and standards regarding the youth development profession.
- Find ways to better recognize and celebrate extraordinary contributions to youth development.

EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS:

- Promote national coordination, collaboration, and partnerships for youth development among:
  - youth development organizations
  - national agencies
  - schools and families
  - programs and practices, when appropriate
- Attract more positive media coverage and private-sector support/promotion for positive youth development and develop better program marketing strategies.
- Use technology to reach new audiences, build new networks, and share resources.

THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION

"The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century" was hosted in Washington, D.C. from February 28 to March 1, 2002, and aimed at converting the results of Local and State Conversations into a national agenda. Almost 1,200 individuals gathered for two days of intense, carefully constructed conversations. With the help of a nationally recognized non-profit organization specializing in large-scale town meetings, a comprehensive agenda had been constructed on the basis of state and local input, working with the key National Conversation planning team.

THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION PARTICIPANTS REPRESENTED THE COUNTRY'S DIVERSITY IN MANY WAYS, INCLUDING AGE, ETHNICITY, GEOGRAPHY, AND ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION:

AGE	
12 – 15	15%
16 – 18	43%
19 – 21	4%
22 – 39	12%
40 – 64	25%
65 or older	1%

ETHNICITY & RACE	
African American	14%
Asian/Pacific Island	3%
Caucasian	67%
Hispanic	6%
Native American	2%
Mixed	6%
Other	2%

REGION	
North East	32%
North Central	23%
South	26%
West	19%

LIFE SETTING	
Farm	25%
Non-farm & small town	32%
Cities/suburbs up to 50,000	22%
Cities up to 500,000	13%
Cities over 500,000	8%

600 ORGANIZATIONS WERE REPRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION, INCLUDING EVERY MAJOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION.

Participants began the National Conversation by engaging in a process where representatives from each state shared the key concerns, findings, and agendas from their State Conversations. The direction to each person was to listen for the common themes among states and to also identify those items of national significance that might have been overlooked.

Upon completion of this process, participants convened at 104 different tables ensuring that 10 different states were represented at each one. The goal of this new "small community" was to disregard state and parochial interests while beginning to consider critical youth development issues from a broad national perspective.

Throughout the process, participants engaged in intimate 10-to-12-person round-table discussions, each led by a trained facilitator who was skilled in assuring equality among voices and maximum participation by everyone. Each table's networked wireless laptop computer served as an "electronic flipchart" to record ideas generated during the small group discussions. Each table's input was instantaneously transmitted to a Theme Team (composed of youth and adult representatives from around the nation) that identified the common ideas, strategies, and actions emerging across the room.

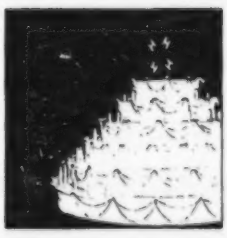
Following the same five themes used as the framework for State and Local Conversations, the participants identified the strategies for implementing these themes at the national level with both public and private resources. The groups worked through each of the five themes, identifying their priorities for action. When combined with other tables' work, this process began to produce commonly endorsed themes for action.

On the second day of the Conversation, participants dug deeper to better identify the vehicles for implementing the themes articulated on day one. In addition, the groups began to prioritize the strategies that seemed most important and/or most realistic. They prioritized using instant polling technology keypads operated by each participant.

As the Conversation moved toward closure, participants engaged in two final activities to ensure a high-quality and integrated national agenda. First, each state reconvened a meeting of its delegates to review how it could best implement the national strategies as part of its action agenda. While the national agenda development process had always focused on building from the grassroots to the state and national level, this provided the states an opportunity to review their own agendas with a better understanding of the national strategies.

Second, the Theme Team reviewed feedback from all of the tables for how to integrate the common ideas across the five themes as well as the sectors that would be involved in implementing the agenda. A special part of this focus was to better understand the role of youth, the role of the public-private partnerships, and the identification of the strategies that would be more appropriate for one than the other.

CONCLUSION: We believe "The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century" is the most comprehensive, inclusive, and democratic process ever engaged for this purpose. We are convinced the resulting recommendations are built on the reality of day-to-day experience, expanded through give-and-take from thousands of conversations, and prioritized as we overlay our goals with today's national agenda. This process is representative, non-partisan, and focused on constructive suggestions for action. It begins with a healthy respect for both public and private partners, engaged at the local, state, and national level. And we see the government as neither the solution nor the problem, but as a key ally and partner comparable to various business and philanthropic communities.



THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION REPRESENTS THE 4-H MOVEMENT'S CENTENNIAL GIFT TO THE NATION.

4-H is all about giving; giving back to your community, your state, your country, and the world. It is appropriate, that as part of its centennial celebration, the 4-H movement would create a national campaign to engage both youth and adults in pledges of community service.

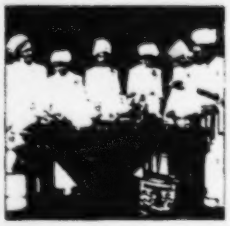
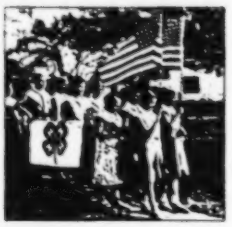
"The Power of YOUth Pledge" Campaign is one of 4-H's gifts to the nation in honor of the centennial of the 4-H youth development movement. The goal is to involve young people and adults in millions of hours of community service and leadership across the nation. Participants make a pledge, describing what they will do to make their community, country, or world a better place to live.

A pledge can be as simple as raking the yard for an elderly neighbor or as big as organizing a statewide project to collect food for the hungry. Pledges have been collected through the mail and via the 4-H centennial Web site at www.4hcentennial.org.

As of March 28, 2002, a total of 183,687 pledges were recorded on the Web site with a commitment of over 3,456,132 hours of community service. During the National Conversation, with a recognition that many states' pledges had not yet been recorded, a goal was set for 5 million hours of community service. The top categories for community service include:

- Helping a younger person
- Improving my community
- Helping an older person
- Mentoring and tutoring
- Building respect and tolerance
- Improving the environment

"The Power of YOUth Pledge" Campaign will continue through the 4-H centennial year. You are encouraged, whether you are an adult or youth, to make your pledge via the Web site (www.4hcentennial.org). Your commitment of service to others will celebrate the 100 years of 4-H service to the nation. Please encourage everyone – family, friends, classmates, teachers, and community leaders – to join you in this historic initiative. Just as there are no barriers to participation in 4-H programs, there are no 4-H membership requirements to participate in this community "The Power of YOUth Pledge" Campaign.

IN THE LATE 1890s, and into the early years of the 20th Century, local clubs arose across America for the nation's boys and girls as a way to enhance their need for better agricultural education and to improve rural economies through scientific, efficient production methods. The concept of local community clubs where young people "learned by doing" became the model for the early development of 4-H Clubs.

No less than nine states proudly claim to be the birthplace of 4-H. But A.B. Graham, who organized a boys' and girls' agricultural club in 1902 in Springfield Township, Ohio, is most often credited with the origin of the 4-H movement.

IN 1907 OR 1908, the first emblem used nationally was a three-leaf clover reflecting head, heart, and hands designed by O.H. Benson. In 1911, he suggested a fourth clover leaf should be added to reflect the commitment to "hustle." This was later changed to "health" in the emblem known today.

IN 1914, Congress passed the Smith-Lever Act which established the Cooperative Extension Service of which 4-H is a part, providing the federal financial and educational support.

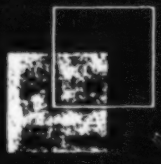
DURING THE 1930s, 4-H began a movement beyond just food and animal production projects. In 1945, Congress passed the Bankhead-Flanagan Act, which recognized 4-H as one of nine Extension responsibilities, providing additional public support. In this Act, Congress directed that 2/3 of the $12 million appropriation go directly for support of 4-H programs.

IN 1951, the Chevy Chase Junior College in Chevy Chase, Maryland, was purchased as a site for a national 4-H training center by the National 4-H Club Foundation. This site is today known as the National 4-H Conference Center, hosting National 4-H Council's offices and many 4-H and other youth groups during meetings, conferences, and tours of Washington, D.C.

SINCE 2000, the National 4-H Strategic Directions Team, with the involvement of hundreds of youth, volunteers, and staff developed the "National 4-H Strategic Plan, 'Power of Youth in a Changing World.'" Through this effort a new vision was adopted: "A world in which youth and adults learn, grow, and work together as catalysts for positive change." The five major elements of this strategic plan served as the blueprint for the design of "The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century."

With 6.8 million youth involved, and programs in every county in America, today's 4-H builds on its past, celebrates its present, and charts its future as 4-H prepares for a new century of service and positive youth development.

A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE JCPENNEY AFTER-SCHOOL FUND FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT FOR THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION PROCESS, PARTICULARLY THE PRODUCTION OF THIS FINAL REPORT.



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National 4-H Council is a nonprofit organization that partners with 4-H, the Cooperative Extension System and other organizations to pursue its vision, implement its strategies, and accomplish its mission to advance the 4-H youth development movement building a world in which youth and adults learn, grow, and work together as catalysts for positive change. National 4-H Council is committed to a policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, sex, religion, religious creed, ancestry or national origin, age, veteran status, sexual orientation, marital status, physical or mental disability. Mention or display of trademark, proprietary product or firm in text or figures does not constitute an endorsement by National 4-H Council and does not imply approval to the exclusion of suitable products or firms.

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